

INFANT SALVATION:

AN

ESSAY,

TO PROVE THE SALVATION OF ALL WHO
DIE IN INFANCY:

WITH

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS.

WRITTEN WITH A PARTICULAR VIEW TO THE CONSOLATION
OF BEREAVED PARENTS.

"Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your Children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it."

Deut. 1, 39.

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P R E F A C E.

THE importance of the subject, and the little hitherto written thereon, form the Author's apology for the following essay.

Good men have been much divided in their sentiments on this question. Many, from the guilt and depravity with which infants are born, have hastily inferred the certainty of their future misery. And "many unguarded expressions (says Dr. Gill) have been dropped concerning the punishment of such infants, which are not at all to the credit of "truth."* A few persons know that an attempt has lately been made to revive this uncomfortable notion, in terms still more harsh and exceptionable, to the no small distress of some individuals, particularly, of parents bleeding with recent bereavements.

To such, an antidote will be peculiarly seasonable, and to others, it is hoped not unacceptable. But as the Author is an enemy to all personal controversies, he has taken up the subject, and endeavoured to answer every objection he could collect, without a *direct* reference to any writer on the opposite side; not wishing to keep alive publications, already fast sinking, by their own weight, into merited oblivion.

Many, however, who have shuddered at asserting the damnation of millions of infants, have doubted the evidence of their salvation. After much painful hesitation, they have supposed the case of children dying in infancy among the "secret things" which belong only "to the Lord our God." But, perhaps, the following pages, with the divine blessing, may happily convince such that they are mistaken:—that the scriptures here adduced, if not quite so clear and decisive as on some fundamental points of our religion, are yet abundantly satisfactory;—and that the salvation of infants is among those "things which are revealed," and which consequently "belong to us and to our CHILDREN."†

* Body of Divinity, vol. 11, p. 543. † Deut. xxix, 29;

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INFANT SALVATION.

INTRODUCTION.

NEXT to his own personal Salvation, nothing can come nearer the heart of a parent, than the future and eternal happiness of his children. They are parts of ourselves ; and, when it pleases Divine Providence to take them from us, we feel the stroke, like that of the knife which separates one of the most precious of our members ; it is, in our Lord's expressive phraseology, the loss of a *right eye*, the amputation of a *right hand*. Among the various thoughts that crowd into the afflicted mind, on such occasions, one of the most pressing is an inquiry after their *eternal state*. "What, my son ! the son of my womb !" says the afflicted mother—"What, the son of my vows !" * says the distressed father—"Ah, whither is thy spirit fled ?—To what world of joy or sorrow, of happiness or misery, art thou gone ?—O Absalom, my son, my son !"—Those who are not parents, or, at least, who have not a parent's heart, may coldly censure these passionate exclamations ; and, with philosophical apathy, condemn these feelings. Not so the Almighty : he, who

* Prov. xxxi, 2.

knows our frame, and formed us for sensibility, has borrowed the tenderest of these sensations to shadow his supreme compassion toward us. Yes; "as a father pitieth his children,"—as a "mother" compassionates "her sucking Child"—so the Lord regardeth "them that fear him."

We revere your feelings, ye bereaved parents; and, while your anxieties are all "tremblingly alive," let us apply to that good word of God, which alone can yield satisfaction to our enquiries.

In the first place, however, it will be highly proper to examine the Scripture account of our state by nature, or the moral circumstances in which children are born into the world. Now the *depravity*, and misery of this state is so evident from Scripture*, and matter of fact, that few Christians totally deny it; and many of the wisest and best Heathens strenuously maintained it.

The *imputation* of the sin of Adam, (as a federal head) to all his posterity, is another circumstance clearly asserted in the New Testament, particularly by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in the following passage†.

"As by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death, [successively],

* See the following Scriptures: Ps. xiv. li. and liii. Rom. ii, iii, and v. Eph. ii. 3, &c.

† Rom. v. 12, &c.

passed upon all men, for that, [in him], all have sinned, for [before and] until the law, [was given by Moses], sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed where there is no law, [since the very nature of sin is the violation of a law]. Nevertheless, Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over [infants] them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him who was to come," [i. e. Jesus Christ].

"Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience, many were made [or constituted] sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made [constituted] righteous."

If this awful view of the natural condition of mankind be admitted—and Scripture compels me to admit it*—then it follows, that the arguments to be alleged in favour of the Salvation of Infants, must not rest on the absolute innocence or purity of human

* The Church of England has summarily comprehended what she apprehends to be the Scripture doctrine, in the following words:—That "Original Sin... is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is, of his own nature, inclined to evil; so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and, therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation."—ART. IX.

The Assembly of Divines teach, that "All mankind, by the Fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, of death itself, and to the pains of Hell for ever."

CATECH. Ans. 19

nature. No ; if infants are saved, they, as well as adults, must be saved by grace alone—" Sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

If the Reader should require me to *perfectly* harmonize these facts with the divine perfections, I confess my inability ; but it does not from thence follow that they are irreconcilable. Our view of divine truths may be compared to our view of the heavenly bodies. Our eyes can survey but a small part of the celestial sphere at once, and that very imperfectly. The few scattered stars beheld with our naked eye, appear to have no connexion with each other. But here Astronomy steps in, and with her instruments of science, by discovering the nature, the relations, and dependances of the heavenly bodies, displays the wisdom and magnificence of the Creator. Still her aid is partial ; thousands of stars she discovers in different parts of the sphere, continue to appear only as brilliant spangles ; but she reasons from analogy, and justly concludes from what she can discover, in the orbs thus brought within observation, that, were the means of knowledge sufficient, the same wisdom and magnificence might be discerned in the rest.—Let us apply this. Natural Reason, indeed, discovers some few important truths. Revelation applies the powers of the telescope to the mind, and both improves our knowledge of those truths, and enriches us with others. Still, however, there remain many inscrutable secrets both in Providence and Redemption ; but we may safely infer that the confusion which seems to remain among *divine truths*, is merely owing to our contracted and imperfect view of them.

But

But though I pretend not to solve *all* the difficulties which occur in the divine counsels and government, permit me to repeat a hint or two already suggested, that may have a tendency to soften something of their apparent harshness.

And 1st.—Let it be remembered, that Adam was both the *natural* and *federal* head, of his posterity. As the former, we were feminally in him—in the scripture phraseology, we were all in his loins; as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, and the Messiah in those of David. Thus modern Philosophy instructs us that the animals and plants, originally created, contained feminally and radically all of the same species which have since sprang from them*. Adam was also a federal (or covenant) head; and the advantages of his standing, had he stood, would have been equally transferable with his guilt in falling.

But 2ndly.—God has been pleased, in consequence of our loss by Adam, to institute a similar constitution for our salvation. Was Adam our *natural*, Christ is our *spiritual* head; and, as truly as we derive from the former a polluted and depraved nature, so truly do believers derive a renewed and divine nature from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Again, as Adam was, in like manner is Christ, a *federal* head; as the guilt of the former, so the righteousness of the latter, is imputed to us; with this difference, however, in our favour, that only one act of disobedience is imputed to us from the first;

* See Gill's Body of Divinity, Vol. I. p. 524.

but the whole of the obedience of the second Adam, our Redeemer. Also the depravity of our nature is rather of a negative than a positive kind*; but the principle of holiness derived from God's Spirit, is invincibly active and energetic.

It cannot be denied, however, but in one respect the influence of Adam's sin is more extensive than that of imputed righteousness: the former reached to all mankind, because he was the head of all: but not so Jesus Christ; he is the head of the church, and to believers only are the benefits of his redemption transferred. But why this was so ordained—why it pleased God to select some only of mankind as vessels of mercy, I know not. God may, doubtless, have wise ends inconceivable to us. This I am persuaded, it was not through want of efficacy in Christ's atonement,—it was not owing to any impotency of divine grace;—it was not for want of compassion in God;—least of all, could it be from any pleasure the Deity could receive from the misery of his creatures. “As I live, saith the LORD,

* “In order to account for a sinful corruption of nature, . . . there is not the least need of supposing any evil quality *infused, implanted,* or wrought into the nature of man by any *positive* cause, or influence whatsoever.—The absence of positive good principles, and so the withholding of a special divine influence to maintain those good principles, leaving the common natural principles of self-love, natural appetite, &c. (which were in man in innocence), leaving these, I say, to themselves, . . . will certainly be followed with the total corruption of the heart, without any positive influence at all: and it was thus indeed that corruption of nature came on Adam immediately on his fall, and comes on all his posterity as sinning in him, and falling with him.” *Edwards On Orig. Sin, Part IV. ch. 2.*

I have

I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.”*—The mention of *election* naturally leads me to observe, that if infants are saved, they must be included in that decree; and interested in all its blessings.—If “predestinated,” they must also be renewed by divine grace, though not “called” by the outward word; “justified” likewise by the application of Christ’s righteousness, and finally and eventually “glorified”†.

The possibility, and even certainty of this fact, in many instances, is, I believe, uncontroverted; but that ALL who die in infancy are thus saved, has been by many doubted; and by some resolutely denied. The distinction has been drawn either

1st. From the characters of the parents: some extending eternal life to all the children of *professing* Christians; others to those of *real* Believers only†.

2dly. Many have connected this blessing with the Sacrament of Baptism, making it a saving ordinance: and others

* Ezek. xxxiii, 11. † Rom. viii, 30.

† Some humane Divines, who have shuddered at the notion of Infant damnation, and yet have not seen the evidences of their universal Salvation, have conjectured that the children of Heathens, and unbelievers, might be *annihilated* at death. But beside the objections that lie against this, in common with that of their partial salvation, this does not seem to agree either with the divine perfections, or the scripture doctrine of a general resurrection; but is principally to be rejected on this ground, that annihilation is no part of the penalty of the law, or of the wages of sin; otherwise Christ, in suffering for us, must have been annihilated. See Brine against Watts, Part iii, ch. 6. and the present Dr. Jonathan Edwards against Chauncy, ch. v.

3dly. Have referred it to the sovereign will of God, who may have chosen some, and rejected others, merely from his own good pleasure.—To each of these I have objections.

To the first, I reply, that though many external privileges are promised to the faith of parents; yet I know of no authority for supposing eternal life to be thus annexed*. Nor are the children of Pagans, or profane persons, any farther gone from original righteousness, than those of the most religious parents. Besides, this supposition makes children suffer, not only for the crime of their *first*, but also of their *immediate* parents.

Secondly, That Baptism is not a saving ordinance even to adults, is clear, from that Simon Magus, after he had received it, was yet “in the gall of bitterness, and bonds of iniquity;” † and we see daily the same of thousands, either sprinkled in infancy, or immersed at riper years.

With respect to the third, I perceive not the same motives for discriminating grace in infants as in adults. No motive (and can we conceive the Deity to act without?) can be suggested why God has selected the peculiar objects of his choice, but the glory of his own grace. Here he takes an avaritious revenue officer, in Zaccheus; a dishonest runaway, in Onesimus;

* This will be farther considered among the objections to our hypothesis.

† Acts viii. 23.

among the Corinthians, he chose the most abandoned characters for licentiousness and debauchery;—and in Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, free grace was magnified by selecting a character, if possible, still worse.* But infants do not present that *variety* of character, having no personal sin; and, in original guilt, they are exactly on a level. They therefore do not seem to afford the same opportunity for glorifying divine sovereignty in their discrimination.

It is not, however, meant to rest the cause of infants here.—In the following pages, it is intended to prosecute the subject farther, by reasoning from the Scriptures, and from the divine perfections in favour of their salvation; and most of our arguments will conclude equally for the salvation of ALL infants without exception.

* Luke xix, 5.—Philemon 19—18.—I Cor. vi, 9, 11.—I Cor. xv, 3. I Tim. 1, 15.

ARGUMENT I.

From the DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

THOUGH sin, as sin, must ever be hateful to God, and every subject therewith polluted obnoxious to his displeasure, yet there is a manifest difference between *original* and *actual* guilt—a difference analogous to that between *personal* and *imputed* righteousness:—consequently we become guilty through our connexion with Adam, in the same manner as we are made righteous through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. As therefore *we* cannot properly be said to *merit* eternal life by his obedience; so neither can we (before actual sin) be said, in a strict sense, to *deserve* eternal death, any otherwise than through our relation to our first progenitor. It is on this account, I suppose, that the Prophet calls infants (as he is commonly, and I think, justly understood) “innocents,” and with an epithet of tenderness and pity for their sufferings “poor innocents.”*

Now may we not adopt Abraham’s reasoning in another case, and say—Will the Lord destroy the *innocent* with the wicked?—Will he involve them in the same irremediable misery?—“That be far from thee. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” †

* Jer. ii. 34.—xix. 4. compare verse 5. † Gen. xviii, 25.

This will, in some measure, “ justify the ways of God to man.”—If notwithstanding original sin, God inflicts final vengeance on those *only* who add thereto actual transgression ; and, at the same time, points out to *them* a door of hope ;—Will not this go far to soften the apparent severity of the dispensation ?—Perhaps but for this merciful provision, the Deity would never have adopted that œconomy. Probably the very appointment of Adam, as a covenant head to his posterity, was with a view to introduce Jesus Christ in the same character, with the greater propriety and glory ; and the abounding of sin unto death was permitted to display to greater advantage the superabounding of divine grace unto eternal life.

What may add force to this method of reasoning is, that God himself seems to have adopted it in the case of Cain and Abel. When the Lord had vouchsafed the well-known token of accepting Abel’s offering (probably fire from heaven) and rejected Cain’s, Cain was wroth, and his countenance fell ; the Lord, (perhaps in the Shecinah,) was pleased to reason even with Cain.—“ Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen ?—If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? and if not, a sin-offering coucheth at the door”*.—So were the Lord pleased to condescend to reason with man, on original guilt ; might he not say, “ If thou hast not added actual to thy original sin, that alone shall not be thy perdition : and if thou hast, (as all have) behold a sacrifice at hand—“ Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

* Gen. iv. See Kennicott’s Dissertation on Cain and Abel, p. 216

A R G U M E N T II.

From a fundamental MAXIM of GOD'S MORAL GOVERNMENT.

IT was a distinguishing character of the God of Israel, that he visited the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; even unto the third and fourth generation: It is obvious, however, that this was intended of those only who walked in the ways of their fathers. When therefore the Jews abused this maxim to a reflection on the moral character of the Deity, and said "The fathers have eaten four grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," the Lord reproves the injurious reflection—No; says the Lord, it shall no more be thus said—"Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father—Every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge."*

Now then, if it is a fundamental maxim of the divine government to visit the parents' sins on those children *only* who walk in the same ways, and copy their transgressions, may we not reasonably *hope*—may we not confidently *rely* on the Lord's not violating this maxim in the condemnation of infants, who have

* Jer. xxxi. 29, 30. † Ezek. xviii, 20.

“not sinned after the similitude of their father’s
“transgression.”

I know that the fact on which this reasoning is founded has been disputed, 1. Because Achan’s children suffered with him, “bearing his iniquity.” But there is no proof that they were infants, it is much more likely that they had joined in their father’s sin before they shared his punishment.*—2. Because the not visiting the father’s sins upon the children is promised as a peculiarity of the gospel dispensation: “In THOSE days,” &c. This I conceive to be a mistake; it is not implied that God had ever acted in this arbitrary manner; but rather that in the period referred to, the people should no more raise this bitter and unjust reflection on the Almighty. “In those days they shall SAY no more, The fathers, &c.†. Some other facts which have been adduced to countenance this charge against the Deity will be considered below, as objections to our hypothesis. The argument as already stated, may be strengthened by the following observations.‡

I. That though the Israelites greatly offended the Lord by their perverseness in the wilderness, and he swore that none of the adults (save Caleb and Joshua) should

* Stackhouse’s History of the Bible, 8vo. Vol. iii, 133.

† See Ainsworth in Exod. xx, 5.

‡ It may be proper to subjoin that some able commentators are of opinion that this promise of not punishing children for their parents’ sins must be understood principally with reference to the punishments of another world. See particularly the Assembly’s annotations on Ezek. xviii, 20.

enter the promised land—"But (saith the Lord) your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." (Num. xiv, 31.) It is true that the rising generation were subject to a temporary inconvenience during the lives of their parents, by wandering with them in the wilderness (which is called "bearing their whoredoms," ver. 33.) This was indeed necessary for their preservation; however, as they acquired age and strength their parents died away, and the children, renouncing their fathers' sin, were not involved in their punishment; but are spoken of in the scriptures as remarkable* for their piety, and the Lord's favor towards them.

II. "Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord," (Psalm cxxvii, 3.) and he claims them as his peculiar treasure—therefore, when the Jews sacrificed their children to Idols, the Lord charges them with sacrificing HIS children.—"Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters whom thou hast borne unto ME, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, that thou hast slain MY children?"†—Let it be remembered that these were the children of cruel idolaters.

III. In the instance of the *Ninevites* the Lord reasons with Jonah on the case of "more than six score thousand persons who knew not their right hand from their left," which is most naturally and generally interpreted of young children, and the number is not at all incredi-

* See Jer. ii, 2, 3. † Ezek. xvi, 20, 21.

ble in “an exceeding great city of three days journey” the capital of the Assyrian empire.* Now it is presumed the tenderness with which the Lord speaks of the infants of the *rebellious* Jews, and *heathen* inhabitants of Nineveh is no small confirmation of the above argument, and greatly encourages our confidence that he will not condemn millions of such infants to irremediable misery.

ARGUMENT III.

From the CONDUCT and DISCOURSES of JESUS CHRIST.

THE Sun of righteousness arose, as well as set, in blood.—Ah! cruel Herod, thy sanguinary heart stained with blood the dawn of the Redeemer’s kingdom. “In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they are not.” As the Evangelist* hath applied the language of the Prophet to this event, let us add the comfortable assurance that Jehovah immediately subjoins—“Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And

* See Jonah iii, 3. iv. 11. with the Assembly’s annotations. Gill’s comment. and Poli. Synop. in loc.

there.

there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD that the children shall come again to their own border."† Yes, ye bereaved mothers, there is hope in the end of your departed offspring. Though they are captives at present in "the land of darkness and of death," Captivity shall be taken captive; Death shall be swallowed up in victory, and they shall come again "from the land of the Enemy." Yes! ye slaughtered innocents! ye were the first martyrs for an infant Redeemer, and your blood is precious in his fight! Verily, "great is your reward in Heaven."

But let our eyes revert to the celestial luminary. The sun beams are not red; it is the interposed cloud which gives them that appearance. Sun of righteousness, we hail the brightness of thy rising! What healing doth thy beams convey!

Well saith the Prophet "He shall not cry aloud nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets;—a bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench." The more weak and tender his disciples, the more kind and compassionate the Saviour.—Methinks I see him in the house of one of his followers: his disciples come to him, big with mistaken ideas of the temporalities of his kingdom; and having been disputing among themselves (like too many of their successors) which of them should be the greatest therein, they appeal to their master, each supposing that the merit of his services would secure him the pre-emi-

* Matt. ii. 17, 18. † Jer. xxxi. 16.

nence. But let us mark the wisdom and gentleness with which he checks their ambition, and silences their contentions. Among his surrounding auditors he observes a little child, perhaps one of the family where he then was—he calls it to him—takes it tenderly in his arms, and places it before them.* Hush, ye disputatious tempers! Silence, ye ambitious spirits! Behold the model of a christian disciple!—"Except, (say the lips of incarnate wisdom—except) ye be converted and become as little children" in meekness, teachableness and humility, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" neither be acknowledged true disciples here, nor be admitted to disciples' places in the kingdom of glory above. "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."†—With such a model placed before our view, and such a master to direct our studies, what proficients ought we to be in the school of christianity! Alas! what proficients are we!—"And whosoever, (continues the Redeemer—whosoever) shall receive one such little child in my name (*i. e.* as belonging to me) receiveth me: but who-so shall offend one of these little ones," especially when of capacity to "believe in me," it were better that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

* Matt. xviii, 2. &c.

† St. Luke's expression is somewhat different. (Ch. xviii. 17.) "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of Heaven as a little child"—*i. e.* as a little child receives it—"shall in no wise enter therein"—Do not little Children then, as such, enter in when they die in infancy?

D

"Take

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones—for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels (the angels that attend them from earliest infancy) enjoy the distinguished honor incessantly to "behold the face of my father who is in Heaven."* Take heed also, because even "the Son of man" himself "is come to seek and to save that which was lost," and disdains not that gracious character to the *least* or meanest of his flock.

"How think ye," my disciples, "if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, would he not leave the ninety and nine in the mountain and go and seek that which is gone astray? And if he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more over that sheep, than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these LITTLE ONES should" be left to "perish" through inattention or neglect.

At another time we behold the Saviour of mankind surrounded by his old enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees. The multitude attend him with their young, and, perhaps some of them *diseased*, infants. They press through the surrounding disciples, but are check-

* See Dr. Doddridge on this passage: But the late Mr. Toplady explains it so as to form a direct proof of our Hypothesis. By "angels" he understands "the SOULS of such as die in their infancy," who upon their bodies being previously "dislodged by death," do "always behold the face of God in Heaven (Historic proof, Introd. p. lxxviii.) This however, as I doubt it is somewhat forced, I wish not to insist on.

ed by their reproof. "Their master (they seem to say) is engaged with persons, and in business, of more importance."—But what unusual severity veils his countenance? he is "*much displeased*."* "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such" infants,† and adults resembling the meekness of their character, is my "kingdom" composed, both in earth and heaven. "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein.—And he took them up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them."

Without excluding a general reference to all his followers, under the character of children, it seems exceedingly clear that our Lord refers, principally and immediately, to young children *as such*—and when he blesses them—pronounces them the capable subjects of his

* Mark x, 13, &c.

† "Of such infants"] Infants and those who "become like them" Assembly's Ann. in Luke xviii, 16.

"Taliū enim," &c. Erasmus, Beza and Piscator. [in Poli. Syn.] Some others "of such as RESEMBLE these;" but Doddridge disapproves this rendering; and observes "it is the part of a faithful translator not to limit the sense of the original, nor to fix what it leaves ambiguous." (Fam. Expos. vol. ii, §. 136.) Mr. Henry says "the word (τοιοῦτοι) generally signifies not similitude, but identity; nor can any one instance be found where it excludes the persons or things mentioned." Other authorities might be added. Dr. Stennet understands it of little children in general, "those who die in infancy." (Ansr. to Dr. Addington, p. 61.) and Mr. Booth remarks that this passage wears a smiling aspect on the final state of such (children) as die in infancy; and that without any reference to carnal descent, which seems to be a Jewish tenet."

Pædobap. Exam. p. 350.

kingdom—denounces a woe against those who injure, or despise them—and declares it to be his Father's will, that not one of them should perish—who shall adjudge thousands and millions of them to eternal misery?—God forbid that I should be the man!

Once more, let us attend the Redeemer in his last triumphant entry to Jerusalem.—The king of Israel, the king of Glory, riding upon an *Ass*!—and attended by the shouts of *children*! The scorn of fools, the song of drunkards, and the jest of infidels. (Was there ever such a comment on that text—"He poureth contempt on princes?"*) But what say the infant multitude?—"Hosannah to the son of David! Hosannah in the highest.—Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." † The Scribes and Pharisees murmur and complain—"Hearest thou what these say?" Jesus heard—and hearing applauded—"Have ye never read, out of the mouths of BABES and SUCKLINGS, thou hast perfected praise?"—Yes: and that God who perfected praise from infant lips on earth, will surely not refuse their voices a part in his celestial choir.

Upon the whole of this argument, we may observe that our gracious Redeemer at all times paid a particular attention to young children; and declared them not only the capable, but the *actual* subjects of his kingdom—and that too, as far as appears without any reference to the faith of their parents. All that were brought—yea, some that were not brought—he took them in his arms and blessed them—will he ever say to such as these—"Depart from me, for I never knew ye?"

* Pf. cvii, 40. † Matt. xxi, 9, &c.

ARGUMENT IV.

From the case of DAVID.

IT might no doubt afford some satisfaction, could we ascertain in what view the ancient believers considered their departed infants. The only case, however, left on record of this nature is that of *David*, which, if not decisive, at least strongly favours our hypothesis. During the child's sickness he fasted and prayed for its recovery; but when it was dead he comforted himself with this reflection, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." "I shall go to him,"—most obviously means, not only "to the state of the dead, to the grave"—but, as *Dr. Gill* observes, "to heaven and eternal happiness, where his soul was, as he comfortably hoped and believed:"* otherwise the thought had little in it to compose such extreme trouble and affliction as he then felt.

The Shunammite lost her child in tender years, and had faith to say "it is well:"† but as we do not exactly know its age, and it might probably be passed that of mere infancy, we cannot argue on this instance.

* *Gill's Comment.* in 11. Sam. xii, 23.

† 11 Kings iv, 26.

A R G U M E N T V.

From the Nature of the final JUDGMENT, future PUNISHMENT, &c.

THERE is not, in all the Scriptures, any intimation that those who are finally condemned, will be condemned, either by reason of any decree of preterition against them, or on account of their mere relation to, or derivation from, the first Father of mankind. No: the sentence is always represented as involved by some *actual* transgression in thought, word, or deed, of which mere infants are not capable. When the dead *small* and *great*, infants as well as adults, are represented before the final Judgment seat, they are judged according to the DEEDS written in the books; * and by these “every mouth will be stopped,” and all the world stand convicted before the bar of God. And when our incarnate Judge shall pronounce the sentence of eternal banishment, it shall be against only “the workers of iniquity.” †

Now, if eternal condemnation ensue only as the consequence of *actual* sins—if all who depart into everlasting fire are *workers* of iniquity—surely, children are excluded from that awful judgment.

* Rom. ii, 6.—11 Cor. v. 10.—11 Tim. iv, 14.—Rev. xx, 12, 13.

† Matt. vii, 13.—Luke xiii, 27. &c.

It may be alleged, that if the not having done evil works may exempt infants from future punishment, by a parity of reasoning, their not having done good works will exclude them from the rewards of heaven ; so that they must be suspended between both worlds, as unfit for either. But the cases are not parallel. Good works do not qualify for Heaven as bad ones do for Hell. Upon the footing of works all men must be found guilty ; and the righteous will be the first to acknowledge it. The book of life, however, will be the witness for their salvation ; and the grace of God the cause of it, through the meritorious obedience of the Saviour.

Permit me to add that the *torments* of a *future* state (according to the scripture account of them) do not seem such as infants are *capable* of suffering.

I consider sin and sorrow so connected in the original constitution of things, that nothing but a miracle of grace can ever separate them. We see this even in the present life. Some sins, as those of excessive debauchery, naturally and regularly induce their own punishment : and others will sooner or later have the same effect. How often do cruelty and villainy (when they escape public justice) produce remorse, dejection and despair ; and either waste the flesh in " pining atrophy," consume the faculties by idiotism or distraction, or (perhaps more frequently) urge the hand of suicide to cut the thread of human life ? The same connection obtains in the other world. The consci-

ousness

ousness of sin committed and of eternal loss sustained is "the worm that never dies:" the heat of unsubdued passions, the flame of irreconcilable discord, and a sense of divine wrath, form a "fire that cannot be quenched," and, consequently, must be eternal.—Now a great part of this punishment evidently arises from consciousness of personal guilt, and is consequently attached thereto; it seems therefore impossible that children can suffer this, unless the Almighty should endue them with a new kind of consciousness on purpose to torment them, which it is not at all honorable to the divine perfections to suppose.

That young children do not and *cannot* commit actual transgressions is determined by the common sense of mankind; (as is also the case with lunatics and mere idiots :) since it requires not merely to be under a law (as we are all born under the laws of our country) but some capacity of knowledge and obedience, to constitute the capacity of sinning. This is as well the doctrine of scripture as of reason, and when St. Paul describes infants as those "who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," what does he mean, but that they have not committed actual, personal sins?*

But if infants are not the proper subjects of personal judgment, and much less of future misery, we may hope to find them among the Lamb's company on mount Sion; and here I beg leave to insert a passage,

*This age, indeed, fruitful with absurdities, hath produced an author capable of asserting that infants sin "in a very short space after they

that will express (better than I am capable of expressing) an additional argument to be derived from one of the Apocalyptical visions. The beloved Apostle (Rev. chap. vii and xiv.) Saw the Lamb of God upon mount Sion, attended by an hundred and forty and four thousand true Israelites, "having his Father's name written on their foreheads:" beside these he saw also an innumerable multitude redeemed from all nations, and kindreds, people and tongues, employed in anthems of redeeming love.

they are born,"—even while hanging "at the breast," and scripture hath been pressed into the defence of this most ridiculous Hypothesis. The Psalmist says "The wicked are estranged from the womb"—This is their *original* depravity—"They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies:" This is the way in which their depravity is generally first discovered. But this language is to be taken with some latitude, unless any person wish to prove that children speak as soon as they are born. The expression means (and can only mean) that children sin as soon as they are capable of sinning, and that lying is commonly the first vice to which they are addicted. (Ps. lviii, 3.)

It would be paying too serious an attention to such reveries to answer the arguments derived from the anger of infants and the tears of sucklings. The scriptures describe infants as such as have "no knowledge between good and evil." (See Deut. i. 39.—Isa. vii, 16.) But the author of the above strange position will not admit this to be any apology for infants, because *wilful* ignorance is no excuse for adults: such in some degree was that of the servant in the Parable, who though he "knew not his master's will," did "things worthy of stripes," which had his ignorance been totally inevitable, he could not have done. The case of the trespass offering is equally impertinent, since that was never offered for children, and in adults did not always imply any degree of *moral turpitude*, nor was it to be offered till the offending party knew that he had transgressed. See Leviticus v. and vii.

E

"By

“ By the one hundred and forty and four thousand
 “ sealed in their foreheads (a definitive for an indefi-
 “ nitive number, which is common in scripture lan-
 “ guage) I understand” (says my author) “ those,
 “ who, living to mature age and where the Gospel is
 “ afforded, are enabled to make a public and visible
 “ profession of religion, and are marked as it were in
 “ their foreheads, and known to whom they belong
 “ by their open and habitual separation from the
 “ spirit and customs of the world *which lieth in wicked-*
 “ *ness.* And the exceeding great multitude contra-
 “ distinguished from these, I conceive to be those, who
 “ are, elsewhere, styled the Lord’s *hidden ones*; and
 “ that these are a great multitude indeed, gathered by
 “ him who knows them that are his, out of *all nations,*
 “ *and kindreds, and people, and tongues.* I may distri-
 “ bute them into the following classes.

“ I. INFANTS. I think it at least highly probable,
 “ that when our Lord says, *suffer little children to come*
 “ *unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom*
 “ *of heaven,* he does not only intimate the necessity of
 “ becoming *like* little children in simplicity, as a qua-
 “ lification without which, (as he expressly declares in
 “ other places) we cannot enter into his kingdom,
 “ but informs us of a *fact*; that the number of in-
 “ fants, who are effectually redeemed to God by his
 “ blood, so greatly exceeds the aggregate of adult be-
 “ lievers, that, comparatively speaking, his kingdom
 “ may be said to consist of little children. . . . They
 “ are born for a better world than this. They just
 “ enter this state of tribulation, they quickly pass
 “ through it, *their robes are washed white in the blood of*
 “ *the*

“ *the Lamb*, and they are admitted for his sake before
 “ the throne. Should I be asked to assign the age,
 “ which children *begin* to be accountable for actual
 “ sin, it would give me no pain to confess my ignorance. *The Lord knoweth.*” *

This respectable writer adds two other classes, namely, “ a people hidden among the most degenerate communities, civil or ecclesiastical, that bear the name of christian”—and a select, though secret number among the heathen—but these go beyond the limits of my subject (though not of my heart) I must therefore not enlarge the quotation: nor will I be positive that the above is the exact sense of this sublime vision; yet few expositions that I have seen of this mysterious book appear to me more probable.

I shall now leave these arguments to impress their own weight upon the reader's mind, while I examine the principal objections I have been able to meet with to this scriptural, rational, and comfortable doctrine.

* *Messiah*, 50. Sermon by the Rev. J. Newton, vol. 11. p. 415.

OBJECTION I.

*Children involved in the CRIMES and TEMPORAL
RUIN of their Parents.*

THE scripture furnishes several incontrovertible instances of this: The most striking are the deluge—the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah—of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram—of the Canaanites, and of the rebellious Jews. But if Solomon's maxim be admitted, that no man can tell “either love or hatred by that which is before him”—if in the present administration of affairs “all things happen alike to all”^{*}—nothing can be from hence inferred in respect of the future and eternal state of the infant sufferers. This is given up in being urged, for it is only urged to prove the probability that *some* were lost, whereas it equally proves the perdition of all, or of none. And where is the man hardy enough to argue from it that *all* the children of the old world, of the rebellious Jews, &c. were eternally lost?

This argument in another view refutes itself, for if in public calamities all who perish thereby are lost, how many thousands of pious and good men have been destroyed? We need not go to Jerusalem, neither need we turn back to sacred history—In our own country in the time of the civil war, were there no good men who perished by the sword, either in the royal

^{*} Ecclef. ix, 1, 2.

or parliamentary armies? Were there none among the many thousands that perished by the plague in London? It is certain there were many. But is it argued that in national calamities God has a peculiar respect to the safety of his people? I grant there are many striking instances of it: but exceptions will not form a rule. It might as well be argued that because God would have spared Sodom if there had been ten righteous persons in it, that therefore he never brought destruction on any city which contained a proportional number of good men.

Indeed in many instances the death of these innocents may be considered as a blessing to themselves, though a punishment to their parents.—They were “taken from the evil to come.”* To have saved all the children amidst the national calamities brought on their parents, would have required a continued miraculous exertion of divine power, of which there is no example in the scriptures. Suppose, for instance, God had ordered all the young infants to be collected into Noah’s Ark, to say nothing of its impracticability, what could Noah have done with them? Could Noah have nursed, or his wife and daughters have suckled them? No: they must have perished by want or inattention.

Suppose also the infant Canaanites had been preserved, must they not have shared a severer fate? In all human probability, one half would have died by neglect, and the other half in slavery.—The like might be said of the children of Korah and his company.

* If. lvii, 1.

OBJECTION II.

The Scriptures include numbers of Infants among the DAMNED.

THIS I absolutely deny. Let us examine the instances alleged. They are

I. The inhabitants of the old world, among which were doubtless many infants. Now these inhabitants are said by St. Peter to be "spirits in prison,"* *i. e.* in the prison of Hell. But though he mentions spirits in prison which were disobedient in the days of Noah, he does not say that *all* those disobedient persons, were then prisoners; we therefore hope not. As the rain was forty days coming upon the earth, some of its inhabitants might survive a great part of that time, and who can tell but the terror in which they were involved might be a means of leading some of them to repentance? It was too late indeed to be saved in the Ark, for Noah was shut in; but "as all were not (eternally) saved that were in the Ark (say the assembly's of Annotators†,) so it is probable that all were not damned that were out of it."‡

* 1 Peter iii, 19. † On Gen. vii, 22.

‡ The population of the old world has been rated very high, on account of the longevity of its inhabitants; but upon whatever ratio we calculate the increase, I think considerable deduction must be made for the two or three last centuries preceding the flood, since lechery and lust are ever unfriendly to population; which always decreases in proportion as they prevail. As therefore these crimes were at their acmé in this period, I suppose the number of infants comparatively inconsiderable.

St. Peter's words however have nothing to do with infants, for the persons he speaks of were preached to by the Spirit of Christ (in Noah's ministry no doubt,) and were also disobedient to that preaching, neither of which circumstances apply to the little innocents for whom I plead.

II. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire," now among these it has been said might be "more than ten thousand infants."—But who ever heard of ten thousand infants among a city * of Sodomites? especially as we do not know that the whole body of inhabitants in the five cities amounted to half that number.

But suppose them as numerous as you please, are there *any* children among Sodomites? I very much doubt if there were ten young children among all the five cities. How many were there in Lot's family, which was uncontaminated with that lust? Not one.

Again, imagine the children of Sodom, &c. as many as you will, there were none among those Jude describes under the vengeance of eternal fire: for they gave themselves "over to fornication and went after strange flesh,"† which does not apply to infants.

* Nothing as to the population of Sodom can be concluded from its being called a *city*, since the same word is applied to the little town that Cain built and called Enoch. Gen. iv. 17.

† Ver. 7.

As

As to their not being ten righteous persons in the city of Sodom, if there were no children that forms no difficulty; and if there were, the term *righteous* does not properly agree to young children, since that term when used as applying to a character, commonly intends an integrity and principle of obedience of which they do not appear the capable subjects. *

A third instance is from the ix. chap. of Ezekiel. "In this chapter (say the Assembly's annotators) is figured out the slaughter to be made in Jerusalem, of the people that were therein, except the godly mourners that were marked out to be saved." One Angel is commissioned to set a mark upon "the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations" committed in the midst of the city; and another is commissioned to follow with a destroying weapon, and his orders were to "slay utterly old and young, both maids and LITTLE CHILDREN, and women;—but not to come near any man upon whom is the mark."

What this has to do with the eternal damnation of infants it may be difficult to conceive; it has however been applied to it with as much confidence as little reason. The above annotators refer to 11 Chron. xxxvi, 17. for the accomplishment of this prophetic vision; and there the reader may find it in the destruction brought upon Jerusalem by the King of Babylon. This instance belongs therefore to the first objection, and thereto must be referred. Of much the same

* See 1 John iii, 7.

force with the proceeding is an hypothetical argument derived from Rom. ix, 11, 13.

“For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth—as it is written, Jacob have I loved but Esau have I hated.”*

Now it is supposed if Esau had died in infancy he must have been damned, and therefore other reprobates (as Esau is supposed to be) may die in infancy and perish for ever. But it may as well be supposed, that if Jacob had died before his conversion he must have been lost; also, with equal reason, inferred that other elect persons may die before conversion and perish likewise. We have no right to place suppositions against facts. Esau did *not* die in infancy, nor any other reprobate person that we know of, as I have endeavoured to shew above.

* *Odio habui*, comparatè ac figuratè, *i. e.* minus dilexi; q. d. prætuli Israelitas, quanquam gravium criminum reos.—Vid. Gen. xxix, 31. Deut. xxi, 15. Prov. xiii, 24. Matt. vi, 24. Luc. xiv, 26. Joh. xii, 25.—Poli. Syn. in Loc.

OBJECTION III.

From Rom. v, 14

—“*Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.*”

THIS is supposed to be a decisive passage—Let us examine it. The persons here intended by the phrase “them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” are agreed to be *infants*; and the death here intended, in order to prove the damnation of infants, is assumed to be eternal death.

Admitting this, however, it does not follow that infants actually perished; but only that they came under the sentence of condemnation, which is not disputed; for the Apostle adds, “that if death reigned by one [Adam] much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”*—The reign of death, in whatever sense it be understood, does not exclude the reign of grace. Death reigned universally; but are all therefore damned? God forbid. Where sin abounded unto death;—even there hath grace superabounded unto eternal life.†

It may be added, that *Doddridge* and many other able critics and commentators understand this text only

* Ver. 17. † Ver. 20.

of *temporal* death, or mortality.* I confess, however, that Pres. *Edwards's* remark on this text appears to me judicious, that in this discourse the apostle includes the "whole of that death which is the wages of sin . . . though in some parts he has a more particular respect to one part of this whole, in others to another, as his argument leads him; without any more variation, than is common in the same discourse." In this verse, the President is of opinion, that the Apostle more particularly alludes to temporal death—"that part of the punishment which is visible in this world, and which every body therefore sees does in fact come upon all mankind," from thence inferring "that all mankind are exposed to the *whole* of that death which is the proper punishment of sin, whereof that temporal death is a part." But this, as above observed, is of no importance to the present question.

* Fam. Expos. in Loc.

† Edwards on Original Sin, chap. iv. S. 1.

OBJECTION IV.

That FEW will be SAVED.

AS two thirds of mankind are supposed to die in a state of infancy,* the salvation of all infants secures the salvation of the far greater part of mankind. Now it is alleged, that the scriptures represent the people of God as but a small inconsiderable number; and that few find the way to eternal life, because few are chosen thereunto. Let us examine the passages as they occur.

I. Matt. vii, 14. "Strait is the gate that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—This text evidently relates to the difficulties of real and practical religion; difficulties, indeed, that occur not to children who are absolutely and only passive in every part of their salvation. The *few* here are compared with the *many* that go in the ways of vice and sin unto eternal death, which is certainly inapplicable to infants.

II. Matt. xx, 16, and xxii, 14. "Many are called, but FEW chosen."

"Many that are called do not go so far as to profess religion, or any care for the life to come: and among them that do profess well, many are not saved for want of holy conversation"—say the Assembly's anno-

* See Encyclop. Brit. vol. x. art. Man.

tators—and refer the ultimate cause to God's sovereignty.

III. Luke xii, 32. "Fear not **LITTLE Flock**"—refers properly to the small number of Christ's disciples in the days of his flesh, which also has nothing to do with our subject.

IV. Rom. xi, 5.—"There is a remnant according to the election of grace"—This and other parallel texts, refer to the Jewish nation, of which after an incredible and unexampled number were destroyed by the just vengeance of God, a *remnant* were preserved to be at once the subjects and monuments of divine goodness; therefore this text has as little to do with infants as the others.

If it be said, where the scriptures are express, as in respect to the fewness of the elect, we have no right to make exceptions, I will beg leave to answer this by a parallel case. It is repeatedly and expressly asserted that faith and repentance are essential to salvation—"Unless ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins—Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." but infants are capable of neither, must we therefore give up, not only many, but *all* of them as lost eternally?—God forbid!—"As for the places of scripture (says Mr. Perkins) which mention justification and salvation by faith, they are to be restrained to men of years: whereas infants dying in their infancy, and therefore wanting actual faith, . . . are no doubt

aved by some other special work of God's Holy Spirit unknown to us."*

Now if an exception may be formed in favour of infants, as to the necessity of faith, why not in the other case?

I would add that this objection, if it is of any force, excludes not only *some* but a *majority* of infants from future happiness; for if two thirds of the human race die in infancy, were we to allow one third to be elected, which is vastly more than the supporters of infant damnation will admit, and reckon as few adults as the severest bigots can desire, yet must we throw in a considerable majority of the infant race to turn the scale of reprobation.—This is not, however, the Bible method of calculation. When the disciples came with that question, "Lord are there few saved?" he made no direct answer to it; but urged them to enter in at the strait gate.

It is very certain that by listening only to the *sound* of words, we may prove any thing. Another set of texts might be produced to shew that there are *many* saved. For instance: When Paul preached at Thessalonica, "some of the Jews believed—and of the devout Greeks a GREAT MULTITUDE, and of the chief women NOT a FEW." At Berea—"MANY of them believed: also of honorable women, which were Greeks, and of men NOT A few."†

* Works vol. 1 p. 12. † Acts xvii, 4, 12.

† Vol. 1, p. 127.

The fact is, that the far greater part of mankind walk the broad road of sin and death, while the number of those who are enabled to walk the narrow way, are comparatively few. When these however are all collected together, from every kingdom, nation and tongue, the infant part of the elect included, they will form a body which many cannot believe, —yea, “which no man can number.”*

Thus shall the grace of God be magnified in the extent, as well as riches, of his mercy. Thus where death and hell have slain their thousands—tens of thousands shall confess themselves the happy conquests of the Redeemer’s love.

And if, to these, we can permit our imagination to add those innumerable worlds, and systems of worlds which compose the universe, and which may all possibly be filled with holy and happy beings, how vast the idea!—how much too great for a human soul in its present contracted state of existence! “God is great and we know him not”† in any manner adequate to his real magnificence.

* Rev, vii, 9. † Job xxxvi, xxvi, 26.

OBJECTION V.

From the SPECIAL PROMISES to the Children of BELIEVERS.

THIS objection admits the salvation of the children of believers, while it excludes others; thus far it is favourable to our cause, and for the rest we might refer to the arguments already advanced in opposition to such a restriction.* But as this idea is supposed to be countenanced by several passages of scripture, it may be thought to merit a more express answer.

1st. It is urged that there are many promises in the Old Testament of special favor to the children of the Lord's people. God in a peculiar manner engages to be their God: and in Isa. lxxv, 20,—23. are some remarkable expressions respecting them. These, however, so far from peculiarly intending the salvation of the dying infants of God's chosen, appear to me to contain promises of great longevity, and that (for the more rapid increase of population) few or none of their children should die in that state. Let the reader judge for himself—"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days"—*i. e.* The young shall not die in infancy, nor the old till their days are fully ripe. "For the child (*i. e.* youth, not infant) shall die an hundred years old (though the sinner at an hundred years old

* See above, page 8.

shall

shall be accursed.) And they shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat: for [many] as the days of a tree are, the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: (Neither shall they generate a short-lived race, says Bishop Lowth) for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them."—There are other passages which speak of the children of believers as HOLY, and as under a covenant relation to God through their parents; such of these however, as are not peculiar to the Jews, are generally and justly applied to the privileges to which such children are entitled, and the advantages they enjoy, as children of the faithful, in the present life; and, if in any instance they extend farther, they only prove, what we most readily admit, that there are, beside the general arguments in favor of the salvation of *all* children, some other additional ones in favor of those of believers.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING considered, and I hope removed, what objections I have been able to find against the universal salvation of infants, we may now recollect the arguments before stated in their favour, with a particular view to the comfort and encouragement of bereaved parents.

With what confidence may we trust our children in the hands of that God, the harmony of whose perfections appears to require their salvation! Is it not a maxim of his government to punish none but actual transgressors? Hath he not enjoined this as a law to others, and promised to observe it himself, especially under the gospel dispensation? Wherefore then shall we doubt the consistency of his conduct, or the fidelity of his promises?

Compassionate Redeemer! enable us to resign our dying offspring to thy mercy. Surely that voice which once and again invited helpless infants to thy bosom, will not eternally banish them therefrom. With reverence to thy name, may we not return the gracious word on which we hope? Suffer little children to come unto *thee* now, and forbid them not!—Of such, Lord, is thy kingdom.—

Nor need we tremble even for the consequences of the grand and general judgment. When the small as well as great, shall stand before his bar—Behold! the
Judge

Judge is their friend. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," is still his language. If any then shall have reason to dread his frown, they are those that despise or neglect his infant Disciples—"Inasmuch as ye did it not to the LEAST of these, (says the Judge) ye did it not unto me!"

Let us then imitate holy men of old—the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away—Blessed be the name of the Lord. The grave is "the house appointed for all living"—"There the peaceful infant, without so much as knowing what labour and vexation mean, lies still and is quiet; it sleeps and is at rest." Staying only to wash away its native impurity in the laver of regeneration, it bid a speedy adieu to time and terrestrial things . . . just looked on the light, and then withdrew into the more inviting regions of undisturbed repose. Happy Voyager! No sooner launched, than arrived at the Haven!"*

"Babes, thither caught from womb and breast,
 "Claim right to sing above the rest;
 "Because they found the happy shore
 "They neither saw, nor fought before."

ERSKINE.

Neither our tears nor our prayers can now avail to procure their return, were we weak enough to desire it. But we may hope (with David) to go to them—if, being regenerated by divine grace, we copy their simplicity, humility, and dependance—for "of such [and such only] is the kingdom of Heaven."

* Hervey's Meditations, 17th Ed. vol. 1, p. 14.

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THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE, AND THE EXPERIENCE OF

THE WISEST AND BEST MEN IN ALL AGES.

Men, brethren, and fathers, bear ye my Defence which I make now unto you: Acts xviii. i.

THE term *experimental* is applied to sciences founded, not on hypothetical reasoning, but actual *experience*. Applied to religion, it distinguishes *that of the heart*; which, as it is begun, is also continued and completed, in all its parts, by the sovereign agency of the Holy Spirit. Thus the doctrine of divine influences becomes interwoven with the different branches of experimental religion; they will therefore be necessarily connected in the proposed discourse.

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N. B. The slight alteration made in the Title of this Work, since former proposals, is at the express desire of several much respected friends.—Subscribers Names received by the Bookfellers whose names are inserted in the Title page of this Pamphlet, of whom may be had, by the SAME AUTHOR, price Two Pence.

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